

AUTHENTIC COPIES

OF

L E T T E R S

BETWEEN

SIR HENRY CLINTON, K. B.

&c.

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OF

THE



BY HENRY CLAYTON

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AUTHENTIC COPIES

OF

L E T T E R S

BETWEEN

SIR HENRY CLINTON, K. B.
K

AND THE

COMMISSIONERS

FOR

AUDITING THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.XCIII.

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LETTERS

SIR HENRY CLIVON, &c.

COMMUNICATIONS



ADDITIONAL THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

—

LONDON

PRINTED BY THE MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION.

AS so much has been said at the close of last war, and since, respecting the different modes of supplying the army, I have taken the liberty of laying before the Public my correspondence with the office for auditing the public accounts; if it tends to throw any light on that business, which has hitherto been so little understood, and upon

which there are so many opinions, my end will be fully answered, and they will, perhaps, be then convinced, that if any positive fixed general system could be adopted, that of contract, which was established by my predecessor, Sir William Howe, and continued during my command, was the best under the probable duration of offensive war, in which secrecy and celerity of operation demands that the public stores and warlike depots of every kind should be amply provided, and ever ready at an instant to answer the call of the commander in chief.



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OF

L E T T E R S, &c.

*Pursuant to an Act of Parliament,
passed in the twenty-fifth year of
the reign of his Majesty King
George the Third, intituled “ An
“ Act for the better examining
“ and auditing the Public Ac-
“ counts of this kingdom—”*

THESE are to require you to exhibit to
us, on or before the first day of May next,
at twelve of the clock at noon, at our office,
authen-

authenticated copies of all the orders issued by the commanders in chief in North America, for regulating the department of the Quarter-master General: And hereof you are not to fail.

Given under our hands at our office
in Scotland Yard, Whitehall, this
seventh day of April, in the year
of our Lord 1786.

(Signed) WM. MOLLESON.
JOHN. THO. BATT.
JOHN MARTIN LEAKE.

*To Colonel Oliver De
Lancey, Adjutant
General for North
America.*

TO

TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL DE LANCEY.

Portland Place, June 3, 1786.

SIR,

HAVING maturely considered the importance of the investigation, in which the Commissioners for auditing the Public Accounts are at present engaged; and the letter you have written to me, in consequence of their precept, (requiring authenticated copies of all orders issued by the commanders in chief in North America for regulating the department of Quarter-master General) I feel myself called upon by every principle of duty, not only to enable you to obey their mandate, as far as relates to my commands,
but

but to offer those gentlemen every information, either personally, or otherwise, which my experience and situations may have furnished me with upon the subject.

Different opinions have gone forth respecting the two modes of supplying the trains wanted for the land and water movements, and various other exigencies of an acting army; and I understand, that each is supported by the suffrages of most respectable military characters.

As the determining this great national question may involve most important future consequences to the public, every aid should be sought which can throw light upon the subject; and I am of opinion, that the sentiments of all the general officers who have had commands from Lord Amherst, who,

I believe, first established this mode of contract, to Sir Guy Carleton inclusive, (if collected by proper authority) might lead to an effectual decision of it.

As I cannot be entitled to either praise or censure for the merits or defects of the mode followed by me, having only adopted what I found established by my predecessor, Sir W. Howe, (which the then probable short duration of the war would have prevented my altering had I even judged it a bad one) I feel myself entirely disinterested in the event, and have consequently no other inducement for becoming a volunteer in this business, than that ardent zeal for the public welfare which has ever influenced my conduct.

I must however acknowledge, that I am partial to the supplying armies by contract,

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(upon proper terms) for many good reasons, amongst which the known limits of the expence may not be the least; for the purchasing every thing at the opening a campaign would require considerable sums of money, the greatest part of which might probably be lost, (should the war be suddenly closed) from the great disadvantage under which it is well known government always sells.* Local and temporary considerations may indeed induce a general officer to adopt the latter plan, as was the case with me in 1776 in Virginia and the Carolinas, where I found the articles wanted exceeding cheap, and with Lord Cornwallis in 1780 and 1781, when there was no force to oppose him, and he could purchase from friends cheap, and

* It is well known at what rate government is obliged to pay when in want, and at what rate it must sell at the close of a war.

could

could take from the deserted plantations of the enemies ; and I understand with Sir Guy Carleton, in 1782, very near the close of the war, when of course those articles were to be had (of those who had had the contract) exceeding cheap also. But as a general system, I am inclined to be of opinion, that the doing it by contract is the best, in which opinion, I think, the Commissioners will agree with me, when they read the proceedings of the two Boards of Investigation, which I appointed at New York for the very purpose of inquiring into this business. And I beg leave to recommend the perusal of them to the Commissioners, as being replete with the most important information, and containing every argument which can well be adduced on either side the question. These papers were transmitted by me to the Lords of the Treasury in the course of 1781 and

early in 1782, and may consequently be obtained by application to their Board.*

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

(Signed) H. CLINTON.

* These investigations and proceedings, and the reports thereon, and the commander in chief's correspondence with the Treasury, were recommended by the Lords of the Treasury, (through their secretary, Mr. Robinson) to the then president of the Board of public Accounts, before that Board's making their seventh Report in June 1782, on the extraordinary expenditures, but that gentleman neglected to avail himself of them.

TO LIEUT. GEN. SIR HENRY CLINTON,

*Office for auditing the Public
Accounts, 4th Nov. 1786.*

S I R,

IN consequence of the obliging offer contained in your letter to Colonel De Lancey, dated the 3d of June last, to give the Board “ every information, either personally or “ otherwise, which your experience and situation may have furnished you with,” the Commissioners are encouraged to trouble you with the following inquiries :

First, Whether any persons, *not* belonging to the Quarter-master General’s department,
were

were employed to make frequent musters of the drivers, horses, waggons, carts, waggon-masters, conductors, clerks, store-keepers, artificers, and labourers, serving in or paid by that department? and if the returns of these musters, or any of them, have been preserved, it is desired that they may be transmitted to the Board.

Secondly, Whether it ever came to your knowledge, that any of the persons entrusted in the departments of the Quarter-master General, Barrack-master General, Commissary General, and Engineers, were the owners of, or concerned in the profits arising from the horses, &c. or boats and ships.

Thirdly, Whether, during your command, any orders were given, by which persons entrusted

trusted with purchasing, keeping, or issuing of public stores, were forbidden to charge more than they paid, or to appropriate any part thereof to their own use, under pretence of usage, perquisite of office, or otherwise? And whether all persons employed in offices where the public money was received, or paid, or where the public stores were received or issued, or persons employed to controul or check the same, were forbidden to trade directly or indirectly, or to have any concern in the prize of vessels, boats, waggons, carts, and horses? And if any such orders were given, either written or verbal, desire that copies, or the substance of them, may be communicated to the Board.

I have

I have the honour to be, with great respect,

S I R,

Your most obedient and

Most humble servant,

(Signed) PHIL. DEARE.

N. B. If these gentlemen had been so good as to have taken the trouble of sending to the Treasury for the papers recommended in my letter to Colonel De Lancey, they would have found all these questions fully answered.

TO

TO PHIL. DEARE, ESQ.

Portland Place, Dec. 26, 1786.

S I R;

HAVING received your letter of the 4th ult. when I was in the country, I could not, for want of the necessary papers, supply the information required by the Commissioners in the three questions, to which you have, in their name, desired my answer. Since my coming to town I have run over as much of my correspondence, and other papers relating to the departments of the army lately under my command, as the time would permit. And though the queries proposed ra-

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ther branch from the line I had marked to myself in my letter to Colonel De Lancey of the 3d of June, 1786, which was written under an idea that the Commissioners were then engaged in an inquiry into the merits of the two modes of supplying the trains wanted for the land and water movements of an acting army, I have endeavoured to collect, in one point of view, all that I found material for the purpose of answering them in the order in which they occur ; it being my sincere wish to give the Commissioners every information in my power.

FIRST QUESTION.

“ Whether any persons, not belonging to
 “ the Quarter-master General's department,
 “ were

“ were employed to make frequent musters
“ of the drivers, horses, waggons, carts,
“ waggon-masters, conductors, clerks, store-
“ keepers, artificers, and labourers, serving
“ in or paid by that department ?”

A N S W E R.

I do not recollect that any persons not belonging to the Quarter-master General's department were employed to make frequent musters of the drivers, horses, waggons, carts, &c. serving in or paid by that department, before the month of August 1781, when a muster was recommended by a Board of Investigation, composed of general officers and magistrates, (which I had constituted on a representation from Major

Drummond, Commissary of Accounts, when he first began to act, that he had made some important discoveries respecting the expenditure of the public money. (This muster was, I believe, the first ever ordered by any commander in chief in America of the description you mention; and as it was every way sudden and unexpected, the returns of it, which accompany the proceedings, and report of that board, which I sent to the Treasury, are most ample testimonies, not only that the trains, &c. attached to the Quarter-master General's department were kept up to the establishment ordered, but that there was a considerable depot besides, (supported at the expence of the contractors) in constant readiness for any other exigencies of the service. The Quarter-master General, (who was always a general officer, of ability in his profession, and of the highest trust

trust and confidence) having been ever regarded as responsible to the commander in chief for competent supplies, at all seasons and on the most sudden calls; and having every reason to suppose that the establishment regularly corresponded with the reports made to me by that officer; I am free to own, that no other check appeared necessary than the controul of the Quarter-master General by such musters as he might judge expedient. And in justice to the officers of that department, I take this opportunity of declaring, that I always found them ready to answer my requisitions in the fullest and speediest manner, of which my march thro' the Jerseys in 1773, which required a train to transport twenty-one days provisions for 17,000 men, (including the troops, and followers) the more, in January 1781, to fa-

vour

vour the revolt of great part of the rebel army, which required the utmost celerity and secrecy ; and my order for the one intended in September of the same year, both of which were complied with at a day's notice, are (besides many others, not necessary now to enumerate) convincing proofs, and will consequently be allowed to be sufficient inducements for me to take it for granted, that the department was most scrupulously kept up to the establishment ordered. But had the Commissary of Accounts thought himself sufficiently authorised by his commission to have acted from the first, which I frequently recommended it to him to do, and had suggested, that he judged frequent musters of the trains requisite, I should, probably, have ordered them. But I should have been cautious (under the uncertain duration of the war)

war) how I listened to any proposal for changing the system I found established, even if I had any doubts respecting it, as no man could foresee the mischievous consequences which might have followed an alteration, from the apparent impossibility of procuring other supplies equally efficient when wanted; and a change (by me at least) must have been peculiarly improper while I was in daily expectation of receiving permission to resign the command, for which I had repeatedly laid my humble entreaties at his Majesty's feet; in which, however, I was directed to remain, in terms (I must acknowledge) most flattering and honourable to me,

SECOND

SECOND QUESTION.

“ Whether it ever came to your know-
 “ ledge that any of the persons entrusted in
 “ the departments of the Quarter-master Ge-
 “ neral, Barrack-master General, Commis-
 “ sary General, and Engineers, were the
 “ owners of, or concerned in the profits ari-
 “ sing from the horses, and on the boats
 “ and ships, &c. ?”

A N S W E R.

I never had official information that they
 were the owners of, or concerned in the pro-
 fits arising from the horses, &c. and the
 boats and ships, &c. It had (it is true) been
 much the subject of conversation during part
 of my command; that this was not only
 then the case, in a certain degree, but as Sir

William Erskine, the Quarter-master General, informed me had been ever the practice in America from General Braddock's, Lord Loudon's, Lord Amherst's, General Gage's, and Sir William Howe's command, but not having the smallest reason to suspect fraud, and having every one to be satisfied with the efficiency of my supplies, I did not think it necessary for me to take any measures respecting it.

THIRD QUESTION.

“ Whether during your command any
 “ orders were given by which persons en-
 “ trusted with purchasing, keeping, or issuing
 “ of public stores, were forbidden to charge
 “ more than they paid, or to appropriate any
 “ part thereof to their own use, under pre-

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“ tence

“ tence of usage, perquisite of office, or
 “ otherwise—and whether all persons em-
 “ ployed in offices, when the public money
 “ was received or paid, or when the public
 “ stores were received or issued, or persons
 “ employed to controul or check the same,
 “ were forbidden to trade directly or indirect-
 “ ly, or to have any concern in the prize
 “ of vessels, boats, waggons, carts, and
 “ horses ?”

A N S W E R.

No orders which I recollect were issued
 during my commanding the army in chief,
 by which the persons described were forbid-
 den to charge more for stores purchased
 than they paid ; as I humbly conceive that
 frauds of that flagitious nature being amply
 punishable under the articles of war, as well
 as the laws of the land, specific orders were
 not

not wanting to prevent them. But as I judged it possible that the public might not always have full credit given for all the fresh provisions taken from the enemy, and issued to the navy and army, after informing Mr. Wier (the then Commissary General) of my intentions, I gave public orders in July, 1779, to take all captured articles out of the hands of the Commissary General and his deputies, and place them in those of a Commissary of Captures nominated particularly for that service ; that the troops and sailors when acting with the army might be supplied gratis, and the salt provisions, sent at a great expence from England, be saved to the public, in proportion to the quantity of fresh issued to the troops, from what was captured from the enemy, and not paid for. And on the opening the campaign in Carolina in February, 1780, I appointed Commissaries of Captures

by commission, for the purpose of converting to the good of the service, and the use, conveniency, and benefit of the army, all cattle and moveable property which might be captured from his majesty's enemies. My orders of that period, and the commission and instructions given to those gentlemen and the Commissary General's deputy, will explain to the Commissioners, the cautions I used to prevent receipts being taken for those articles (when issued to the troops) as for crown rations; and no issues proceeding from the Commissary General's stores on the days the troops were supplied by the Commissaries of Captures; a very considerable saving accrued, of course, to the public during that expedition, to the amount (as I have been informed) of nearly a million of rations. I do not, however, claim merit from the barely having done my duty; but it surprised me not a lit-

tle to see this arrangement, and the benefits resulting from it, ascribed to the orders of a Lieutenant General serving under my command, which were issued on the 23d of December, 1780, nearly eighteen months subsequent to mine, from which it is to be presumed they originated.

Though I am not inclined to suspect that persons entrusted with the disbursement of the public money could be so lost to every principle of honour and the fear of punishment, as to dare to charge more for what they purchased than what was actually paid ; and do not believe the circumstance ever happened under my immediate command, particularly as the Commissary of Accounts (Colonel Drummond) whose duty it was “ to curtail
 “ all improper charges, prevent unnecessary
 “ expences, correct abuses, and see that the
 “ service

“ service was carried on with due æconomy,” &c.* never reported it to me ; I am yet far from asserting that it did not happen : but if it ever occurred in any of the detached parts of my army, it is to be lamented that the general officer commanding those detached troops did not report it to me, that the offenders might have been properly punished, as being the readiest and most effectual means of stopping the practice for the present, and preventing it in future. And for the same reason I am equally disinclined to believe, that any person entrusted with the charge of the public stores had appropriated any part thereof to their own use or emolument.

* Reference to the Treasury letter dated 19th December, 1780 ; the last page will shew where this æconomical arrangement originated.

With

With respect to the part of the question which asks whether all persons concerned in the receipt or payment of the public money, or in the receipts or issues of public stores, or persons employed in controlling or checking the same, were forbidden to trade directly or indirectly—I beg leave to say, that I never heard it even suspected that officers of that description were concerned in trade ; but by referring to the commissions and instructions under which they acted, and which were sent to the Board by Captain Smith, my late secretary, it will be seen how far they were restricted from trade by the spirit of them. As to the officers of control, I cannot suppose they were ever concerned ; its impropriety being so well understood, that a respectable merchant, whom I appointed to control and check the rum purchases, gave up his concerns in that branch

branch of business, and declined trade altogether while employed. I beg leave likewise to mention, that during an expedition which I commanded in 1776, all articles purchased for cloathing, feeding, and moving the troops, were charged to the public at the very cheap prices they cost (rum for instance, at 2s. 10d. per gallon) nor were the persons who purchased them, even permitted to charge the usual commission for their trouble.* This being a matter I can speak to from my own knowledge, as I had more leisure to look into the public expenditures from the smallness of my army, and the very inactive state to which it was reduced.

In answer to the last part of the question, respecting their having a concern in the price

* Colonel Drummond acted as Quarter-master General on that expedition.

of vessels, horses, &c. I can only say, that I do not recollect my having given any formal orders to prevent it, except in a conversation I had with the Quarter-master General, my expressing a wonder that contract and controul should be lodged in the same person, for the reasons already adduced in my answer to the second question ; for having, as I there said, every reason to be satisfied with the efficiency of the supplies, and having none to suspect fraud or injury to the public from the system under which I found them conducted, I apprehended many inconveniencies, and even dangers, but saw no advantages which might arise from the engaging in new experiments, while we were carrying on an offensive war of such uncertain duration ; and had Mr. Wier, of whose integrity and zeal I had the greatest opinion, been so unwise to have claimed the rights of

a commission he held, exactly similar to that of his successor, Mr. Watson, by proposing to take the whole supplies into his own hands, while the army was acting offensively (as I understand Mr. Watson did afterwards, when it was on a strict defensive) I doubt whether I should have acquiesced even with that alteration ; and I have too high an opinion of the respectable officer who succeeded me, to suppose he would have acted otherwise than I did under the same circumstances. Reduced however (as that general officer was) to the most strict defensive, and brought almost within sight of a conclusion of the war, he acted perfectly right in making such economical arrangements as he might judge most conducive to the public benefit. But while conducting an offensive war of great magnitude, no commander in chief could examine the accounts of the departments of his
army,

army, with the precision their intricacy and multiplicity required, though ever so qualified by the most familiar acquaintance with figures and accounts ; nor indeed could there have been any necessity for it while there was a Commissary of Accounts on the spot ; the other more important cases of such a command being amply sufficient to employ every moment of his time. It must be admitted, therefore, that frauds, abuses, and unnecessary expences in the management of the army extraordinaries in North America (supposing they had existed) could have been effectually obviated only by the Commissary of Accounts having acted from the first of his appointment, which he was repeatedly called upon to do. But as I have to regret that he did not, I may without vanity assert, that I took every other precaution which my situation

and information suggested. If I happened at any time to be struck with the increase of expence, I immediately called upon the departments to account for it, as may be seen by referring to my correspondence, particularly my circular letter to the heads of departments, dated 28th of June, 1780, with their answers. This I humbly presume may invalidate the insinuation of the Seventh Report of the Commissioners of the Public Accounts, that I granted away the public money without even the ceremony of a quarterly abstract. For though so much stress is laid upon final warrants, and the abstracts accompanying them, it will readily occur to the slightest reflection, that in the dispersed state of the departments, the whole of their disbursements could scarcely ever be collected in time to be included in the quarterly abstracts, and consequently the money wanted for the public service

service must have been unavoidably granted on account of the commanders in chief, according to the confidence they placed in the public officers, (whose high rank, ability, and very respectable characters, ought to have raised them even above suspicion) and the estimates they laid before them. However, as soon as I was warranted by the certificates of the Commissary of Accounts, or the report of a Board which I appointed to receive and examine his objections to the accounts of some of the departments, and their answers, I granted final warrants, before I left the command, to every department, except that of the Commissary General, whose accounts had not been reported upon in time, though the Commissary of Accounts was repeatedly urged to expedite them. I took effectual measure to secure to the public and the army, every possible advantage from the cattle, forage,

rage, and other moveable property taken
 from the enemy. And to obtain every light
 which could forward the purposes of œcono-
 my and retrenchment, I appointed the most
 respectable and best qualified boards of inves-
 tigation which that army and country afford-
 ed to receive information from the Commis-
 sary of Accounts, and assist in minutely exa-
 mining into all the expenditures of the diffe-
 rent departments from the beginning of the
 war, to nearly its close; that every abuse
 which existed might be detected, and every
 possible means of saving the public money
 adopted. I also appointed a gentleman of re-
 spectable rank and character to watch over
 the purchases of rum, that every justice
 might be done to the nation and the soldier
 in that article; and the instant the circum-
 stances

stances of the times* tied up my hands and confined me to a strict defensive, I called upon all the departments to make every possible reduction in their respective trains, my plan for which was given to General Robinson upon his being appointed to succeed me in the command. I do not presume to plume myself with any benefits resulting from these measures to this kingdom, but I hope it will not be judged unreasonable in me to expect that they may at least serve to refute the charges of want of oeconomy and attention, which have been so very illiberally insinuated against me in the seventh Report alluded to. I am, SIR,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

H. C.

* The Resolution of the House of Commons of March, 1782.

P. S.

P. S. To save the trouble of transcribing my orders and letters respecting the appointment of Commissaries of Captures, I beg leave to inclose my printed letter to the Commissioners of Public Accounts, in which they are inserted: I likewise take the liberty of referring the Commissioners of the present Board of Accounts to the proceedings of the two Boards of Investigation appointed by me at New-York, which contain a variety of most important information, and may be obtained by application to the Lords of his Majesty's Treasury; having transmitted them to their Lordships from America many months before the above Commissioners of Public Accounts delivered in their seventh Report on the extraordinaries of the army; therein they will also find the return of musters made of the trains and vessels attached

tached to the different departments in August 1781; also for the contract or agreement entered into by Sir William Erskine during the command of my predecessor, Sir William Howe, with Messrs. Winthrop and Kemble in April 1777, and the other documents left by Sir William Erskine in the office of the Quarter-master General, and the formal reports of the deputies, Colonel Bruyn and Major Robinson; the copies of my circular letter to the heads of departments in June 1780, respecting the increase of expenditure, with their answers; and all the other papers referred to in this letter, not already sent to the Commissioners, or included in the above, are herewith inclosed.

H. CLINTON,

*Lieutenant-General, late Commander
in Chief in North-America.*

THE END.